



## Case Study

# The Use of Social Media for Students' Academic Life: Experience from Buhare Community Development Training Institute, Musoma, Tanzania

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**Received:** 25 July 2022; **Revised:** 17 October 2022; **Accepted:** 29 October 2022

**Abstract:** The study assessed the usage of social media networks in seeking information by college students: with reference to Buhare Community Development Training Institute (CDTI), Musoma-Mara region, Tanzania. Data were collected from two hundred seventy-three (273) study participants using questionnaires. The sample of the study was representative. The results from the analysis showed that Buhare CDTI students were familiar with social media while performance and efficiency was the highly cited factor influencing the choice of social media. Study findings further showed that social media sites were a reliable source of information for academic purposes and the majority of the participants noted that the reason for use of social media was academic and information-sharing purposes. Additionally, the majority of the participants revealed that there was a strong relationship between the extent of their use of social media and their academic performance. The study further established that the high cost of Internet bandwidth, identifying the author of materials retrieved from social media sites due to information overload, and failure to discover reliable information to be used on academic references due to the flood of information from social media were the critical challenges faced by students. Conclusively, it was clear from the current study that social media platforms are reliable sources of information to be used by college students in their daily academic life. The study suggests that academic institutions should promote and motivate students to use social media in their daily academic activities. Also, tutors and all academic stakeholders have to train students so that they may have the skills and knowledge to use IT devices.

**Keywords:** Buhare, social media, Community Development Training Institute, social media usage, information seeking, college students

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the study

Worldwide, social media networks are fast-growing means of communication for interpersonal, public, and academic usage. According to Vinay and Rajeev (2012), social media is an online discourse that manages people

to create content, bookmark it, share it and network it. Social media has reduced the distance that occurred in communication where people had solely depended on traditional methods like telephone calls and letters as a communication mode of getting in touch with people. Twitter, Facebook, WeChat, QQ, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms have grown in popularity in recent years due to their convenience and ease of use. The availability of internet connections, their functionality, ease of use, and flexibility are factors that affect the use of social media (Brown, 2010). Employees and students can use social media not only to entertain themselves, but also to connect with colleagues and third parties in order to collaborate on addressing complex problems (Zhou et al., 2021). For example, Sendawula (2022) discovered that social media perception, readiness, and usage positively influence the long-term growth of Small and Medium Enterprises in Uganda. However, insufficient soft and technical skills, a lack of devices such as computers and smartphones, and the high cost of Internet data all undermine business owner-managers use of social media for long-term growth.

With the utilization of social media using the internet network, the communication process and access to information have now become easier and more efficient. Kuppuswamy and Narayan (2010) reported that the use of the internet is about communication through emails; it can also be a platform on which people keep in touch. The Internet allows one to attend a classroom from abroad while seated somewhere in a rural area of any country.

According to Osatuyi (2013), social media networks have an essential role in sharing information and bear various types of information including: administrative, casual, complex and historic. By using social media networks, information can be shared online; therefore, most of the information available on social media generally consists of the most current information. Social media takes on many different forms including microblogging, internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, wikis, podcasts, magazines, photographs or pictures, videos and social bookmarking. Social media assists information seeking to be easily practiced. Hence, it is a reliable source of information for students (Balakrishnan & Gan, 2016). Information seeking, expression of opinion, social information sharing, interaction, entertainment, relaxation, and sharing knowledge are all the miscellaneous factors that stimulate the utilization of social media as an information-seeking tool (Lin & Lu, 2011; Osatuyi, 2013; Whiting & Williams, 2013). Social media as a web-based and mobile technology usually turn communication into an interactive dialogue which is very vital for students in the learning process, especially in higher education learning. The worldwide revolution of social media platforms such as MySpace, Facebook, Skype, Orkut, Twitter, etc. made obvious that social media is extensively the easiest communication process in the world between groups of people (Munkaila & Iddrisu, 2015).

Pfeiffer et al. (2014) claimed that all social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, are more accessible in Africa. This is due to the easy coverage of mobile internet broadband to even rural areas of many African countries. Social media platforms allow many people to connect anywhere with adequate reception. With reference to Tanzania, the statistics showed that 13.8% of internet users were involved in social media networks (Pfeiffer et al., 2014). Awake (2011) revealed that nowadays many Tanzanian teenagers spend most of their time online using smartphones, computers and other devices like tablets and iPods, browsing social media networking sites. Awake (op.cit.) clarifies that in Tanzania, social media networks play an essential role in the communication process, where Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) provide modern civilization through internet devices and telecommunication tools.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education for Tanzania developed the Policy of Information and Communication Technology for Basic Education in 2007. Act No 12 of 2003 for the Communications Regulatory Authority, together with the Policy of 2003 for Tanzania National Information and Communication Technology, create the guidelines for mixing ICT in education in Tanzania. The policy is channelled by the overall objective of global education which oversees pre-primary, primary, secondary and college education. On the other hand, the policy is connected to ICT activities in other areas and sectors, especially Vocational Training, Higher Education, Regional Administration and Local Government (Shao & Seif, 2014). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) categorised social media into six types, which include Blogs and microblogs (e.g. Twitter), content communities (e.g. YouTube), collaborative projects (e.g. Wikipedia), virtual game worlds (e.g. World of Warcraft) and virtual social worlds (e.g. Second Life), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook and WhatsApp). Other technologies used as social media include instant messaging, email, picture-sharing, crowdsourcing, voice-over IP Vlogs, blogs, wall-postings and music-sharing, to name a few. Most of these social media platforms can be combined via social platforms (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Also, social media may be formed into various categories such as Internet forums, microblogging, social blogs, magazines, photographs,

podcasts, videos, weblogs, social bookmarking and wikis. In terms of the use of social media for academic purposes, noted that social media has produced a stylish means of communication that allows people to interact with each other easily. Additionally, Tkáčová et al. (2021) noted that social media has a significant impact on children and teenagers' lives, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the computer becomes not only a necessary and regular tool for education and interpersonal communication but also a means of entertainment and leisure. This provides an advantageous opportunity for youths to use this trending technological channel of communication. Nowadays, social media like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and MySpace are worldwide trending platforms via the internet, with Facebook at the top of the list with an estimate of more than 90 million active users in 2009. Holcomb et al. (2013) reported that 85% market share for colleges and universities in the United States was supported by the Facebook platform. In 2010, Facebook had more than 115 million users which led to an increase in its traffic by up to 70%. MySpace platform holds the second position after Facebook while Twitter followed immediately after MySpace platform (Dhiman, 2022; Whiting & Williams, 2013).

Chaffey (2016) argues that global digital users are estimated to spend more than one hour on social networks every day. He added that the number exceeded to over 20 minutes during the year 2012. The study conducted by Wemaeli (2017) revealed that exchange academic resources among students in the college environment as well as off campus can be more easily done by using social media platforms. Shao and Seif (2014) argue that Google, Facebook, Twitter, etc, are helpful to students in classroom activities, online learning and connecting with instructors at the University of Dodoma. Furthermore, the study outlined that the classroom walls are expanded; the students become great thinkers of the world and students' voices become widely spread by using social media networks. According to Shao and Seif (2014), the education delivery system in Tanzania could be easily conducted with the help of social media.

Despite all of the advantages of social media usage to formal and non-formal education sectors, there is still a challenge of disparity between the extent of positive perceptions of social media and the amount of practical usage. Zaidieh (2012) reported that there are many challenges facing social media usage in education. They mentioned them as; time it takes to use them, privacy and miscommunication. Furthermore, they said that social media sites were inherently designed for conviviality. Dhiman (2022) suggested inhabiting abuse witnessed in social media, which is experienced in the community and risks cyber-utopia.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

According to Khan et al. (2021), social media provides a learning platform that allows students to easily communicate with their peers and subject experts, which is beneficial for collaborative learning. Furthermore, social media is a type of communication that allows teachers and students to communicate through a variety of online learning applications (Vordos et al., 2020). Among the most frequent users of social media platforms worldwide are students. Despite the fact that a wide range of sectors use social media to enhance productivity and improve service delivery, Tanzanian college students have not yet been mentioned in the literature. Few secondary school studies have questioned the use of social media, claiming that its accessibility impacts how secondary students learn, that students squander learning time on it, that they attend classes infrequently, and that they may conduct fraud (Moshi et al., 2018). Moshi et al. (2018) discovered that students download graphics and images that divert them from their academics at times. However, studies by Mazana (2018) and Mutarubukwa and Mazana (2020) recommended students' use of social media as a means of sharing information and tackling various academic difficulties. Due to this paradox, the researchers were compelled to conduct a thorough investigation of how students, particularly those from Tanzania's Community Development Training Institute, have been using social media.

## **1.3 Purpose of the study**

This study's goal is to better understand how social media is used by students specifically at Tanzania's Buhare Community Development Training Institute (CDTI), which is located in Musoma district, Tanzania. Consequently, the goal of this research is to provide answers to the following research questions.

- i. What is the level of students' familiarity with the use of social media?
- ii. What factors affect people's decision to use social media?
- iii. How trustworthy is the information found on social media?

- iv. How do Buhare (CDTI) students use social media?
- v. What functions do social media platforms play in academic performance?
- vi. What is the connection between Social Media Usage and Academic Achievement?
- vii. What are the difficulties that students face when using social media?

## 2. Methodology

The study looked at how college students used social media to find information, with a focus on Buhare CDTI in Musoma, Mara Region, Tanzania. Buhare CDTI is a Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly, and Children (MoHC DGEC) academic institution located in Musoma Municipal, Mara Region. It provides Community Development courses at the certificate levels of National Technical Awards Level 4 (NTA levels 4, 5 and 6). It also conducts research and provides consulting services in the areas of community development and other related fields.

The study was guided by a quantitative research approach that involves computation due to a large number of respondents (273), to develop a generalization of the findings. This sample size was calculated using a sample size calculator from [www.calculator.net](http://www.calculator.net), with three inputs: the population size of Buhare CDTI (930), the confidence level (95%), and the margin of error (5%). The sum of these inputs resulted in a sample size of 273 people. The study used a simple random sampling method because bias is essentially nonexistent and each member of the population has an equal chance of being chosen as a sample member. A questionnaire was used as the primary data collection tool in this study to gather statistically significant data. Closed-ended questions, primarily Yes/No questions, predominated the questionnaires. This helped to raise response rates and eliminate unnecessary responses. The specific goals of the study were taken into account when developing the research questions.

Statistical Product and Service Solution (SPSS) software version 20 computer program was used to analyze the quantitative data from the survey, and the results were presented in tables with accompanying words to make interpretation easier. All moral concerns, such as respecting people's privacy and citing sources to prevent plagiarism, were addressed.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1 Students' familiarity with the use of social media

The participants were asked about their familiarity with various social media and whether they had used them in academic settings. According to the findings, the majority of 254 respondents (93%) were familiar with the Google platform. WhatsApp was used by 84.6% of the students, with Facebook (74.4%) and Twitter (40.3%) following close behind. According to the findings, LinkedIn was the least used platform, with only 63 (23.1%) respondents using it. Table 1 summarizes this information:

When compared to other social media platforms, the findings revealed that the Google platform had the most participants, followed by WhatsApp. This implies that the most popular platforms were Google and WhatsApp. Furthermore, the findings revealed that Google was used for researching academic issues, WhatsApp was used for communication and sharing information in daily academic life, and Facebook and Twitter were used for sharing entertainment videos, pictures, and status updates for fun. Despite the fact that only 84.6% of the participants in this study mentioned WhatsApp, Kutu and Kutu (2022) found that 94% of respondents said they used social media for academic purposes, with WhatsApp and Zoom receiving the highest usage rates of 83% and 79%, respectively. This study's results are almost in line with those of Kutu and Kutu's study (2022), which found that the majority of respondents (94%) indicated that they did.

**Table 1.** Students' Familiarity with the Use of Social Media

Social Media	Freq.	%
Wikipedia	163	59.7
Facebook	203	74.4
Twitter	110	40.3
LinkedIn	63	23.1
Google	254	93.0
WhatsApp	231	84.6

### 3.2 Factors affecting people's decision to use social media

The researchers wanted to know what factors influenced people's use of social media. The findings in Table 2 clearly show that 184 (67.4%) respondents suggested that one of the factors was the user's age. A total of 156 (57.1%) respondents reported that internet bandwidth was affordable. The level of the study was chosen as a factor by 189 (69.2%) of the respondents, and respondents' employment status was also suggested as a factor by 159 (58.2%) of the respondents.

**Table 2.** Factors Affecting People's Decision to Use Social Media

Factors	Freq.	%
Performance and efficiency	199	72.9
User friendly of social media networks	191	70.0
Availability of updated information	191	70.0
Level of study	189	69.2
Age of users	184	67.4
Owning IT devices	184	67.4
Privacy and security of the users	175	64.1
Graphical layout and artistic appearance	169	61.9
Parents or guardians' occupation	160	58.6
Respondents employment status	159	58.2
Internet bandwidth cost	156	57.1

The occupation of parents or guardians was also mentioned by 160 (58.6%) of the respondents, while owning IT devices was mentioned by 184 (67.4%). 191 (70.0%) of respondents mentioned the user friendliness of social media networks. 175 (64.1%) of respondents suggested user privacy and security, while 191 (70.0%) said the availability of up-to-date information was a factor. A total of 199 (72.9%) respondents stated that performance and efficiency expectations influenced their choice of social media platform, while 169 (61.9%) respondents mentioned the graphical layout and artistic appearance of the social media platform.

These findings indicate that the researcher’s suggested factors influenced the choice of social media platforms during the study. Although the majority of respondents (72.9%) indicated a performance and efficiency expectation of information from social media, this was revealed to be the primary key factor influencing college students’ choice of social media in seeking information. However, the other mentioned factors were also revealed to have played a role in influencing college students’ choice of social media platform/site.

### 3.3 Trustworthy information found on social media

The study also looked into the dependability of information obtained from social media. According to the findings of the analysis, 255 (93.4%) study participants reported that social media sites were a reliable source of information for academic purposes. Again, the findings revealed that 242 (88.6%) respondents reported that information available on social media was useful and satisfied their needs for academic information.

Furthermore, it was clearly demonstrated that 205 (68.0%) respondents reported that social media references were acceptable to tutors. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the majority of 215 (78.8%) respondents possessed relevant skills and knowledge of using IT devices. Table 3 summarizes the findings further.

**Table 3.** Trustworthy of Information Found on Social Media

Category	YES		NO	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Social media as reliable source of information	255	93.4	18	6.6
Availability of reliable information from social media	242	88.6	31	11.4
Acceptability of reference from Social Network	205	68.0	68	27.3
Skills and knowledge of using IT devices	215	78.8	58	21.2

Results from all four reservation questions made it very evident that social media was a trustworthy source of information that college students could use for their academic work. This suggests that the content on social media suited the information needs of college students and was trustworthy enough to be used as a dependable source for academic purposes. This implies that the majority of respondents were using social media on a daily basis. The findings discussed above also align with those of Sheridan Library (2020), which claimed that social media may deliver knowledge instantly and more quickly than other venues or sources. This is due to their extensive knowledge, yet there is also a growing need to confirm and assess the veracity of this knowledge. Despite the abundance of information on social media, not all of it is reliable or appropriate for academic purposes. In order to assess the accuracy and dependability of information obtained via social media networks, users must take into account a number of crucial elements. However, the study conducted in Malaysia by See Yin Lim (2014) revealed that a large number of students and educators have begun to investigate and embrace the use of Social Media Technologies as a tool for interacting with their institution, their peers, and teaching and learning objectives.

### 3.4 Uses of social media by CDTI students

Researchers were also interested in learning why the pupils used social media. Results showed that 111 respondents (40.7%) used social media primarily for academic purposes, whereas just 54 respondents (19.8%) said they mainly used it for communication. Other respondents, 108 (39.6%), claimed to have utilized social media for both communication and academic purposes as summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Uses of Social Media by CDTI Students

Reasons	Freq.	%
Academic Issues	111	40.7
Communication	54	19.8
Both Academic & Communication	108	39.6

These findings are consistent with those of Wiley and Sission (2006), who discovered that more than 90% of Ghanaian college students used social networks in their studies. Millions of people around the world use social media applications for a variety of reasons and on a regular basis (Al-Rahmi et al., 2014). The widespread use of social media applications by students has contributed to their rapid acceptance (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010; Alenezi & Brinthaup, 2022). This implies that the Buhare CDTI students, like any other students worldwide, were well exposed to social media networks, as the majority of them reported using various social media platforms for both academic and communication purposes. The study findings are further in line with those by Olipas (2022) who reported that students' social media use was also high in terms of entertainment and socialization, communication, and academic purposes. However, according to Alenezi and Brinthaup's (2022) research, students use social media informally for socialization and entertainment, but less frequently as a formal educational tool.

### 3.5 Functions of social media platforms in academic performance

The goal of this study was to shed light on the role of social media in academic performance. According to the findings of the analysis, 235 (86.1%) of the respondents reported an open relationship between the extent of their use of social media and their academic performance. In addition, 227 (83.2%) of the total respondents said social media had helped them improve their academic scores on assignments and class tests. Furthermore, 212 (77.7%) of respondents agreed that social media had helped them keep up with the latest in academic fields, while 211 (77.3%) reported that social media had helped them stay on top of their studies. The specifics are shown in Table 5.

The findings of this study clearly indicate that social media network sites can be useful as educational tools. This implies that all students who use social media networks as a supplement to their learning tools benefit greatly from their time spent on social media for exercises, lecture videos, and other academic sharing. These tools are extremely beneficial to higher education students because they modernize the process of student learning, interaction, collaboration, and sharing.

Other scholars, on the other hand, have argued that social media networks distract and divert students' attention away from their learning. Nonetheless, other scholars with different findings from the above suggested that students use social media because it removes geographical barriers among students worldwide. For example, today, no matter where they are, anyone can interact, comment, debate, and collaboratively create knowledge (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). In this regard, Andersen (2013) added that social media applications help students in many ways, so they must understand how to use them in order to facilitate learner integration and satisfaction. Furthermore, Alenezi and Brinthaup (2022) discovered that the majority of students believed social media facilitated peer contact, faculty interaction, engagement, and collaborative learning. Masele and Rwehikiza (2021) discovered similar findings, establishing that most students

used social media networks for a number of purposes, including interacting with peers, sending messages, comments, and updates, socializing, conversing, and improving their profiles.

**Table 5.** Functions of Social Media Platforms in Academic Performance

Category	Yes		No	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Association between the extent use of social media and academic performance	235	86.1	38	13.9
Social media network help to improve academic score	227	83.2	46	16.8
Social media help stay up-to-date in academic fields	212	77.7	61	22.3
Social media help stay on top performed of studies	211	77.3	62	22.7

### 3.6 Connection between social media usage and academic achievement

The relationship between social media use and academic achievement was another topic of research. According to the study’s findings, the majority of the 246 respondents (90.1%) said that using resources from social media improved their academic performance. 185 respondents (67.8%), when asked about the relevancy of the information gained through social media, said that the information complemented what was being taught in class. In addition, 197 respondents (72.2%) said that participating in academic forums on social media improved their comprehension of the subjects covered in class. Additionally, 211 individuals (77.3%) concurred that online group discussions produced noteworthy outcomes in terms of their academic careers. Table 6 provides information.

**Table 6.** Social Media Usage and Academic Achievement

Category	Yes		No	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Materials from social media improve academic grades	246	90.1	27	9.9
Information from social media complements what is taught in class	185	67.8	88	32.2
Academic forum on social media increases understanding	197	72.2	76	27.8
Group discussions on social media yield good results	211	77.3	62	22.7

The result suggests that strong connections were developing between college students use of social media and their academic success. The findings in table 6 contradict those of Owusu-Acheaw and Larson (2015), who found that social media use by college students did not improve their academic performance in any manner. They argued that the majority of students were using social media for non-academic purposes rather than academic ones. These results contrast with the findings of this survey, which indicated that only 19.8% of the Buhare CDTI students utilized social media for communication purposes, as opposed to 40.7% of them utilizing it for academic purposes. However, the study by Dhiman (2022) reported that there is a clear link between the usage of social media sites and academic performance



and that using social media sites had a detrimental impact on student's academic performance.

### 3.7 Difficulties faced by students when using social media

Challenges faced by college students in using social media were also assessed in this study. These included affordability of owning IT devices, high cost of Internet bandwidth information overload and identification of relevant information and shortage of electronic devices. Others included a lack of skills and knowledge of using IT devices, low Internet connection and speed, Internet connection being unavailable sometimes, acceptability of social media references by tutors and identifying the author of information retrieved from social media. The study identified a number of challenges that students were encountering using social media in using social media as summarized in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Difficulties faced by Students when Using Social Media

Category	Total	
	Freq.	%
High cost of Internet bandwidth	190	69.6
Identifying the author	190	69.6
Information overload	189	69.2
Lack of Internet connection	20	7.3
Skills on using IT devices	15	5.5
Low connection and speed	15	5.5
Unacceptability of references	14	5.1
Owning IT devices	10	4.0
Shortage of electronic devices	10	4.0

In relation to the above findings, some scholars revealed different challenges that college students face when seeking information from social media sites. Agbawe (2018) stated that 88% of social media platforms lead to exposing too much information about the users, which, of course, invades the privacy of the individual user and results in negative effects. Also, Okoro (2013) initiated the challenges and prospects of social media effects like connectivity, interactivity, exclusivity, alertness and all that. Okoro (2013) added that social media have downsides, such as ethical disconnect, language pollution, unverifiable reports, disaffection, moral decay, fraud and lack of integrity. All mentioned challenges may in one way or another decrease the awareness of college students to acknowledge social media as a reliable source of information in their daily academic lives.

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

### 4.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that students in the study area were familiar with a variety of social media, with students having a particularly high level of familiarity with Facebook, Google, and WhatsApp-three of the most frequently cited

social media. Furthermore, the study concludes that people's decisions to use social media are influenced by a variety of factors, such as performance and efficiency, user friendliness of social media networks, and the availability of up-to-date information. Regarding the trustworthiness of information found on social media, the study concludes that the majority of students trust the information from social media as the majority accept references from Social Network. The survey also came to the conclusion that the majority of students used social media for academic concerns and that there was a correlation between academic achievement and social media use. According to the findings, the study also concludes that using social media to access information improves academic performance, but that students face major obstacles when using social media to access various types of information, including the high cost of Internet bandwidth and author identification

## 4.2 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following are the recommendations:

- The study recommended that academic institutions should promote and motivate students to use social media in their daily academic activities. Also, tutors and all academic stakeholders have to train students so that they may have the skills and knowledge to use IT devices.
- Colleges and all academic institutions should promote and motivate students to use social media in their daily academic activities. Also, tutors and all academic stakeholders have to train students so that they may have the skills and knowledge to use IT devices.
- Parents and college authorities should encourage students to positively use social media both in schools and at home for academic purposes to enhance their academic development performance.

## 5. Limitations and suggestions for further studies

This study was conducted at Buhare Community Development Institute in Musoma district, Tanzania and specifically looked into how college students used social media as a source of information in their learning. A different study could be conducted to investigate how social media affects college students' learning processes

## Conflict of interest

The authors have not disclosed any conflicts of interest.

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